

Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

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----- 110104

R 042036 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4366

INFO USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 1353

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PINT, UY

SUBJECT: TENSION INCREASING ON SENATOR ERRO CASE

CINCSO FOR POLAD

REF: MONTEVIDEO 1300

1. SUMMARY: TENSION IS BUILDING UP OVER A POSSIBLE NEW CONGRES-
SIONAL- MILITARY CONFRONTATION, SHOULD THE SENATE REFUSE TO RE-
MOVE SENATOR ERRO' S CONGRESSIONAL IMMUNITIES. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION AND LEGISLATION IS CON-
TINUING ITS HEARINGS ON THE EXECUTIVE' S REQUEST TO LIFT " FRENTE
AMPLIO" SENATOR ENRIQUE ERRO' S CONGRESSIONAL IMMUNITIES. ERRO
MADE A SHORT ORAL STATEMENT BEFORE COMMITTEE ON APRIL 30, DE-
NYING ANY CONNECTION WITH THE MLN " TUPAMARO" TERRORIST ORGANIZA-
TION, BUT REFUSED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM FELLOW SENATORS.

HOWEVER, HE LATER SUBMITTED WRITTEN ANSWERS TO COMMITTEE QUES-
TIONNAIRE. ERRO' S WRITTEN ANSWERS, DELIVERED TO SENATE ON MAY

3, ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE HAD HAD CONTACT WITH A NUMBER OF IN-
DIVIDUALS NOW HELD AS " TUPAMARO" SUSPECTS, BUT DENIED THAT SUCH
CONTACTS WERE INDICATIVE OF HIS OWN PARTICIPATION IN THE SUB-
VERSIVE MOVEMENT. SENATE COMMITTEE IS NOW DEBATING WHETHER
IT CAN SUMMON AND INTERROGATE THOSE SUBVERSIVES WHOSE TESTI-
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MONEY HAS BEEN USED BY MILITARY TO IMPLICATE ERRO. COMMITTEE UNLIKELY TO FORWARD ITS RECOMMENDATIONS TO FULL SENATE BEFORE EARLY NEXT WEEK.

3. WHILE FINAL VOTE OF SENATE ON ERRO CASE STILL SUBJECT TO A NUMBER OF UNCERTAINTIES, ALMOST ALL URUGUAYAN POLITICIANS WITH WHOM WE HAVE DISCUSSED THE CASE ARE OF OPINION EXECUTIVE'S REQUEST WILL FALL SHORT OF TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY (21 VOTES) NECESSARY FOR LIFTING OF IMMUNITIES. SENIOR MEMBER OF SENATOR WILSON FERREIRA ALDUNATE'S OPPOSITION COALITION TOLD ME THAT FERREIRA'S GROUP HAS MADE CONSCIOUS DECISION TO OPPOSE EXECUTIVE'S REQUEST IN ORDER TO "INFLICT A DEFEAT" UPON THE MILITARY. ACCORDING TO FERREIRA GAME PLAN, MILITARY IS AWARE THAT IT COULD NOT TAKE OVER THE GOU DUE TO ITS OWN LACK OF EXPERTISE. FERREIRA GROUP BELIEVES, THEREFORE, THAT IT WOULD BE EASIER TO WIN A CONFRONTATION WITH MILITARY NOW RATHER THAN A YEAR HENCE WHEN ITS CONFIDENCE IN ITS OWN GOVERNING ABILITY MAY BE HIGHER. FORMER AIDE TO SENATOR VASCONCELLOS HAS ALSO TOLD EMBOFF THAT VASCONCELLOS WILL DEFINITELY VOTE AGAINST THE REQUEST.

4. COMMENT: ARMED FORCES ARE APPARENTLY BECOMING INCREASING DETERMINED TO MOVE AGAINST ERRO. HE HAS BEEN PLACED UNDER 24-HOUR SURVEILLANCE BY MILITARY UNITS AND JOINT FORCES HAVE BEEN STATIONED AT PERUVIAN, ARGENTINE, AND CHILEAN EMBASSIES WHERE ERRO MIGHT LIKELY REQUEST ASYLUM. AT MID-AFTERNOON (MAY 4) POLICE RADIO CARRIED ORDERS THAT GUARDS SHOULD BE MOUNTED AT ALL EMBASSIES IN MONTEVIDEO, THOUGH WE HAVE AS YET NOTED NO INCREASE IN VIGILANCE AT CHANCERY. TROOPS AT A NUMBER ARMY UNITS IN MONTEVIDEO HAVE BEEN CONFINED TO BARRACKS. AS SENATE HAS PROLONGED DISCUSSION OF EXECUTIVE'S REQUEST, BOTH CONGRESSIONAL AND MEDIA DEBATE HAS SERVED TO HEIGHTEN CONFRONTATION ATMOSPHERE BETWEEN CONGRESS AND THE MILITARY. SPECULATION NOW RIFE IN BOTH CONGRESSIONAL AND MILITARY CIRCLES THAT MILITARY WILL ARREST ERRO REGARDLESS OF SENATE OUTCOME. OUR CONGRESSIONAL CONTACTS TELL US THAT WERE THIS TO HAPPEN, EVEN THOSE TO OPPOSE ERRO WITHIN CONGRESS WOULD FEEL FORCED TO DENOUNCE THE MILITARY'S DISREGARD FOR CONSTITUTION. SHOULD THIS OCCUR, A RENEWED, MAJOR CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE CONGRESS AND THE ARMED FORCES WOULD LIKELY RESULT WITH THE FORCED CLOSURE OF THE LEGISLATURE A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY.

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